

A Case Study of Rural Community Development and Leadership

The Clinton County Rural Policy Group

By

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The author acknowledges the excellent cooperation of all people associated with the Rural Policy Group who made it possible to tell its story as a community development organization. To those who have served as officers, executive committee members and to the Agricultural Extension agents we express our thanks. It is hoped that this work is a faithful reproduction of the composite picture which they all had a part in making.

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The study of the Clinton County Rural Policy Group is a descriptive account of how rural people in an important agricultural county of Ohio went about the process of improving their communities as well as themselves. This story shows the importance of good leaders and leadership. It is mainly, however, a story of the cooperation of many people from different groups who found a way to come together to exchange views, to develop mutual understanding and to discover facts related to their common problems.

Purpose

This report concerns a decade of organized study of rural community problems at their grass roots in a free society. It describes a method and a model for community development. The purpose of this study is to describe the organized processes used in Clinton County in order that the idea may be useful for other rural people who wish to help themselves.

Method

In order to tell the story of The Rural Policy Group we must divide it into several parts. These parts include explaining what came before The Rural Policy Group, the development and organization of the group, the methods of operation, 10 years of discussion topics and finally problems and recommendations. This study is the product of intensive research with many interviews as well as the study of many records and reports.

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FORERUNNERS OF THE RURAL POLICY GROUP

The Correlation Council

In order to understand how The Rural Policy Group developed, it is necessary to know more about what went on before it started, which pointed the way and planted the seed for its growth.

Rural Policy was preceded by the short-lived Clinton County Correlation Council which began and ended shortly before World War II. Although the objectives and methods of the Correlation Council were not identical, the ideas that were tried helped later in the development of the Rural Policy Group.

The Correlation Council grew out of a small group of a dozen or so prominent farm, business and professional men who met informally at the home of the county agricultural extension agent. They seemed to have in common a desire to discuss freely such problems as those dealing with politics, community improvement, farm-city relationships and other social issues. The county agricultural extension agent, one of the central figures in this group, believed that if leaders of both rural and urban people could develop a better understanding of their mutual problems and learn to work together that many of the needs of farm people as well as non-farm people could be served more effectively.

This informal gathering agreed there should be an overall discussion group where more people could participate. In addition they felt a need for coordinating many conflicting and overlapping activities competing for people's time in the county. From these needs the idea of a forum began to take shape along with a community calendar for the coordination of county organizational activities. Suggestions for the structure of the forum came largely from information obtained by the extension agent from the Los Angeles Coordinating Council.

Organization of the Correlation Council

The Correlation Council was not technically a public meeting. Tickets of admission were issued by the executive committee to persons having a group responsibility such as the officers, committeemen, ministers, teachers, and elected municipal, township, school board and county officials. However, these people could bring guests and as many as 450 people were said to have attended a single meeting.

The activities of the Correlation Council were to be classified under five major divisions, namely: community organization, education, government, conservation and cooperation.

In discussing issues the Correlation Council would obtain a speaker who was an authority on the subject being discussed. Following the speaker the members of the Correlation Council would form a discussion panel to analyze the speaker's remarks on the basis of: matters they did not understand, matters upon which they disagreed and new trends of thought advanced. Questions were raised from the audience as well as from panel members. Topics discussed in such a manner were; Ohio county agricultural and business outlook conference, farm defense conference, functions of government in a democracy, contributions of capitalism and farm cooperatives.

Thus in the years 1940 and 1941 semi-public forums were held in which certain organization leaders of town and country groups were invited to attend. As problems began to appear the attendance of the early leaders began to dwindle. After operating for a year or so, the organization became inactive. Reasons given for the decline was the discovery of important rural and urban differences as well as a need for some recognized and accepted authority to carry out coordination of activities.

Disintegration was hastened by the all-inclusive nature of the Correlation Council which included both urban and rural people. The county as a community was not ready for this type of association and misunderstandings developed. Some urban people expressed the feeling that the council was being "run too much by rural organizations." Rural people felt that urban groups lacked responsiveness because they could not be the "whole show." Because this rift was not reconciled some of the forum topics discussed at the meetings could not be analyzed objectively. One person phrased this feeling well by saying "there was no common attitude and when there is nothing in common there is no group."

Certain other facts characterized the Correlation Council. The council was not attached to any other organizations; that is, responsibility was not fixed on particular rural and urban organizations and the individuals representing these organizations, to see that it was successful.

Some people felt that an attempt was made in the Correlation Council to give a program to the people rather than placing the responsibility on the people to work out their own program. There was some feeling that the council meetings were too "high" a type of meeting.

Others felt that the meetings were good, saying, "They were the kind you wanted to take notes in." Such opinions pointed up the fact that the objectives of the meetings were not related to strong

and uniform feelings of need that would maintain a high level of interest over a long period of time.

These comments illustrate the fact that the council did not fuse with the existing social organization of the broad community which it attempted to serve. The needs and interests of the community were too varied to be included in the scope of the council's action. Such experimentation as that attempted by the Correlation Council may be fruitful if its lessons can be passed on to others. The aims may be highly commendable from most standpoints but where other principles of society are not accounted for its success is usually limited. Much wasted effort can be avoided by leaders who are aware of these principles.

THE BEGINNING OF RURAL POLICY GROUP

During the emergency period of World War II two facts became more evident than before. First, there were needs that could not be solved by individual persons or single organized groups. The awareness of such needs and a means for solving them is illustrated by one person, who said, "We have all had a feeling of need for such an (fact-finding) organization." Second, it was difficult to get different independent organizations to function together efficiently. Clinton County had many well-organized farm groups and rural organizations, but the influence of any single group was not effective in the total community sphere. Because of this, matters or issues of interest to the whole county could not be approached without excessive agitation and confusion. This lack of cooperation between groups was experienced in many areas during the war emergency and handicapped the groups in effective action on important matters.

One sociologically significant factor in community action is this: when a county or community becomes involved in a program for the whole area it must have a mechanism by which it can involve all relevant groups. Such a mechanism was visualized in Clinton County as being a group which would have the acceptance of the community and could function both as a means of gathering information and as a way of crystallizing public opinion for the people it represented.

The Clinton County Rural Policy Group fulfilled this requirement in its own unique way. The pattern was an outgrowth of the imagination and determined efforts of the county agent and several outstanding farm leaders. The county agent was credited by almost all those interviewed as having had the central part in the development of the idea. His concept of an organized approach

to community problems was built upon his observations of the methods used in public forums in neighboring counties and information obtained from other states. This information was obtained by either correspondence or direct visit. To develop the idea he involved other county leaders in investigating and visiting nearby groups. The agent made a visit to New York state to observe first hand the way public discussion of community problems was carried out.

In attempting to piece together the segments of early Rural Policy Group history certain facts stand out. The county agent seemed to be aware of the many broad problems involving farm people. In addition, he had a strong desire to put this awareness into action. This was enhanced by the creative quality of his leadership. These characteristics were not always without their drawbacks. In some cases people were not equally stimulated to act in the same way and not all would agree to the methods used. Aggressive leadership appears as a threat to some people and almost inevitably develops supporting and opposing groups.

A Delicate Problem

The idea of a rural policy group was not carried out by one person and the intricate function of shaping and fitting such an idea to an organized community is a delicate operation. The success of "tailoring" the Rural Policy Group to suit the needs of the county was largely the work of those rural leaders that cooperated in its formulation. Such an organization must mesh into a complex set of social relationships that are already in operation. It must fit without disrupting present organizations or threaten the way the community is constituted. This "fitting" was not accomplished by the earlier Correlation Council and it failed to get off the ground.

The genius of the successful beginning of The Rural Policy Group lay in its integration into a community already highly organized. This integration process offers an important study in human relations and may be studied as an example for communities seeking similar avenues for pulling themselves up by their boot straps.

The major factors that led to the development of this innovation were: first, an awareness of need; second, the county agent's key role in initiating the idea; and third, the place of other leaders in welding the idea into the on-going organizational structure of the county.

The Development of the Rural Policy Group

Like the Correlation Council the Rural Policy Group was started at a gathering in the county extension agent's home by a small group of people. This group, however, consisted of representative farm people rather than the small friendly mixed group that started the Correlation Council.

The farm group met for five sessions to discuss the kind of group they should have in the county. Still predominant in the mind of the county agent was the need for an action group, but others were more inclined toward a fact-finding organization. The way this difference of opinion was resolved developed the unique pattern of the Rural Policy Group.

The originating committee felt that no existing organization could by itself rally the people of the county to their support. For this reason it was decided to present the idea of a county-wide joint organization and ask each organization to send representatives to a special meeting. The purpose of this new group was to discuss and plan ways of analyzing rural problems, but not to carry out proposed solutions. It was also decided that the press would be invited to all meetings, and that any agency that was responsible for the matter being discussed was to be invited to present its side.

Thus the Rural Policy Group started from the beginning not as an action group but as a policy group based on studying the facts. It started as an autonomous organization with all farm groups being represented. It was broader in scope than Agricultural Extension, the Farm Bureau, the Grange, Cooperatives, government agencies and others but cooperated with them and included representatives from them among its members.

Agricultural Extension and the Rural Policy Group

The county extension agent felt that the Rural Policy Group was a means of training leadership as well as a means for attaining some of the broad goals of improving rural life. He saw his role as offering assistance where needed. In his remarks he said, "The best way to train leaders is in the actual analysis of a problem. These kinds of groups often will not go by themselves, so it is my place to help steer them along. I and others may present ideas and let the group choose what they want to do. Then too, I am there all the time to help keep things rolling. I take no official job because other agricultural agencies might feel extension was running the show." Even though he was not an officer, the county agent attended the meetings of the executive committee

as well as other committee meetings. He also took an active part in assisting the president and advising the group. In addition the extension office handled all the important details of notifying members of meetings and other communications. In affect the agent has acted as an executive secretary with the knowledge and assent of all groups.

Orginally the Rural Policy Group had a subcommittee on agriculture, later it was recommended that this committee organize a separate advisory group for extension. The Rural Policy Group president has continued to name a member to the county Extension Advisory Council and for several years the person named in this way acted as chairman of the Council. This method has tended to keep the Extension Advisory Council close to the functions of the larger county organization and also has served to keep the larger group close to the extension program.

Membership in the Rural Policy Group

The membership of the Rural Policy Group consists of representatives of all rural voluntary organizations that have anything to do with agriculture and farm people. These representatives are appointed or elected by their organizations. In addition it is expected that the wife or husband of the representatives will also participate.

All persons chosen to work on subcommittees of the Rural Policy Group automatically become members during the year their committee functions. In this way some non-farm people are brought into membership.

All types of county groups representing such areas of interest as swine, sheep, dairy, agricultural extension and others have two or three of their officers as members. The Farm Bureau Board and all cooperative boards of directors have a member. Paid personnel of any agency such as SCS, PMA, PCA and members of their boards of supervisors are members.

Local community groups including the Granges, Farm Bureau Councils and Home Demonstration Councils each have two couples to represent them. Therefore, membership is widespread and largely made up of those persons that the organizations delegate. These delegates are usually the officers. In this way the system keeps as many of the leaders as possible involved in the making of policy and decisions. It should be added, however, that any farmer in the county may also join as a member at large. Many members that no longer hold positions in or represent local groups continue as members at large.

The Choice of Officers

Officers in the organization have been elected early year. Two slates are nominated for the positions of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and executive board members. The slates are set up by a nominating committee appointed by the president. Officers may be re-elected and the president usually has served two to three years.

The nominating committee received careful instructions about the type of leadership needed. The type of officers sought, particularly the president, were persons of broad interests who could work with all groups. No one would be named as an officer who held a political office or position of professional leadership in an agricultural agency who might be embarrassed by the decisions of the group. In choosing officers, representation from the various rural organizations and the different areas of the county are given consideration.

Policy on Choosing Topics for Discussion in the Rural Policy Group

One of the most important functions of the organization has been gathering of facts and the discussion of important problems in the county. Therefore, a major function of the officers of the Rural Policy Group is to sense the real needs of the county. The choice of problems to be discussed in the monthly meetings during the year are finally determined by the executive committee in their summer meeting. Often a survey of the preference for topics has been taken at the last meeting in the spring to get an expression from the group as to their needs and interests.

In choosing topics the committee has attempted to anticipate in advance situations which might lead to tension or misunderstanding. The Rural Policy Group hoped to give people the unbiased facts before political or other forces developed partisan discussion. Once a topic had become involved in the political channels of the county or if a problem had developed into strong "pro" and "con" feelings the Rural Policy Group would not ordinarily become involved in it.

It was reported that Rural Policy had been asked to take a stand on some county issues. The group has seldom allowed itself, however, to become a part of this process. The usual statement expressed by those interviewed was that the committee's purpose was educational and to endorse one side or the other of a controversial issue would defeat their purpose.

This does not mean that they avoided taking any action, as will be seen in succeeding pages, nor did they succeed in eliminating all controversial subjects. An effort was made to give leadership in developing information about community problems before the people of the county made up their minds.

Political Relations and Rural Policy

Actually the more important matters with which Rural Policy Group has dealt eventually have had political implications. Unless these matters do at some point enter the sphere of the political structure no practical results would occur since public elections and ordinances are usually required in matters of wide public interest. The Rural Policy Group's connection with politics comes only indirectly through the membership, and through them to the organizations which they represent. The members might take problems discussed by the group to their political representatives. In this way the Rural Policy Group could maintain a neutral position and find information on which the public could make decisions.

METHODS OF OPERATION

The Life Cycle of a Problem in the Rural Policy Group

How did a problem move from an idea to community acceptance, and to action in the county? Through what channels did it move?

During the early days of the Rural Policy Group the following procedure was used:

1. The executive committee met to decide what topics were important and should be discussed at Rural Policy Group meetings.
2. The executive committee with the help of the County Agent obtained a speaker on the topic and set up the program for the meeting.
3. The speaker presented his talk and necessary information at the meeting.
4. Discussion took place after the speaker finished.
5. The Rural Policy Group chairman asked the members what they wished to do about the problem.

6. If the members decided to investigate the matter further the chairman appointed a fact-finding committee.
7. The fact-finding committee then would make a survey of the county on the problem. They would meet with the County Agent and the Executive Committee to receive assistance in planning the survey.
8. The fact-finding committee reported to The Rural Policy Group the results of their findings. The findings were distributed in printed form.
9. After discussion, if The Rural Policy Group decided that further action should be taken, the executive committee decided on how to get the information before the rural public. This was done as follows:
 - a. The Executive Committee, often with the assistance of the County Agent, called together the leadership in local areas and suggested the leaders call local meetings to start action.
 - b. At the first local meeting the fact-finding committee distributed facts in printed form, raised the question of what the problem was, and encouraged expression from members present.
 - c. At the second local meeting the fact-finding committee raised the question of what could be done about it.
 - d. If the community decided to do something about the problem they organized themselves into a local action committee.
 - e. The Rural Policy Group withdrew and future community meetings were held under the auspices of local officers elected by the group.
 - f. Local action committees represented their communities in the furtherance of action on a county level.
10. In the early development it was planned to name a legislative committee in The Rural Policy Group to activate and urge action by the properly constituted legislative officers and committees of the community on matters endorsed by The Rural Policy Group.

Changes in Methods

Changes occurred in the organization and procedure listed above as the Rural Policy Group continued to function. One important change was in step "2" above. There was a shift of responsibility for planning the meetings from the executive committee to the specific fact-finding committees. Each year after the newly elected officers were installed they would meet and decide what topics should be taken up the following year. Then they would select a chairman for each topic from The Rural Policy Group membership to be responsible for planning the programs at each meeting. These chairman met with the executive committee and together they decided who from the county should serve on the fact-finding committees. Under this system the fact-finding committee in addition to accumulating and compiling facts was also responsible for securing speakers for the program. The County Agent usually acted as a resource person to these committees. If The Rural Policy Group as a whole wanted further information, or desired to do something about a problem, the matter would be referred to the fact-finding committee for action and more committee members would be appointed by the president as needed to take care of added responsibility.

Another change in the emphasis of The Rural Policy Group occurred in relation to step "9". Organizing the local communities took a great deal of effort and time. Also it was felt that this made too many meetings. Therefore, it was decided to work through the Granges, Farm Bureau Councils, churches, schools and other established groups. The group representatives in The Rural Policy Group were encouraged to take back to their local organizations the ideas and suggestions made at the county meetings and were to encourage action in their groups in areas where it was needed.

Even though The Rural Policy Group has infrequently followed through with the mobilization of community resources on a problem, there are no restrictions to prevent county organizations from taking whatever action they feel is desirable or within their jurisdiction. How effective The Rural Policy Group has been in getting other groups in the county to carry through with recommended action or policy is not easily assessed. Some leaders feel that this is a crucial problem in the success or failure of the Rural Policy Group.

Further changes involved the legislative committee mentioned in step "10". Its original function was to urge action by the properly constituted legislative officers and committees of all rural groups on matters endorsed by The Rural Policy Group. This

committee's function was pertinent, because The Rural Policy Group in itself did not take direct action on matters of legislation but concerned itself largely with the matter of fact-finding, educational activity and the determination and recommendation of sound policy on matters vitally affecting the rural interests of Clinton County. It was through the legislative committee that a fusion was to be made between policy making and action. This committee never really got into operation. Its activities have also been taken over by the fact-finding committees.

Today if there is no organization already in existence to function or act on a problem, The Rural Policy Group may advise the fact-finding committee which made the investigation, to take steps to set up an action organization. If this committee is not able or does not desire to do it, others may be encouraged to follow through. The resulting new organization would be independent from Rural Policy.

FACT-FINDING AND SURVEY METHODS

Each fact-finding committee presents its reports in some form of program before a Rural Policy Group meeting. Some type of printed or mimeographed report is often compiled of the information and data collected by the committee. The size and extent of this report depends on the nature of the problem, the concern of The Rural Policy Group and the time and interest of the fact-finding committee members. The data in these reports often have included charts, tables, maps and excerpts from authoritative sources such as staff members or reports of the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, the Ohio State University, state and local government agencies and others. The reports may contain comparative information for the county, the state or the nation. The data may be obtained from census materials, reports of public agencies and other sources, or it might be obtained from a survey of the county conducted by the members themselves. Conducting their own survey was not tried often, but it proved to be an effective tool in several instances.

Some type of survey approach was used in relation to the subjects of conservation, health, fire prevention, rural churches, youth and safety.

Indirectly the Rural Policy Group participated in a county-wide health survey with an almost complete enumeration of the county. The health survey was carried out by the Clinton County Rural Health Council, an organization which grew directly out of one of the discussions of the Rural Policy Group on rural health needs.

Leadership for the survey included almost all the participants in the Rural Policy Group. A complete report of this survey was published by the council in the form of a printed bulletin.

Variations in Methods

An interesting comparison can be drawn between methods used by Rural Policy. These methods appear to be somewhat related to changes in extension agents.

In the earlier period the fact-finding committees called in experts and explored sources of data available. In a few instances they carried the information from the county meetings out to local community meetings even stimulating the organization of action groups in local areas.

With a change in extension agents, greater emphasis was put upon making surveys to get first hand knowledge of conditions in the county. This self-survey technique had two major results; first, it got the facts about Clinton County, and second, by gathering the information themselves a large number of local people became actively interested and received training in leadership activity.

The main effect the survey method had on the Rural Policy Group is expressed in the words of the county agent, "In order for a survey to be successful a great deal of discussion must take place; in addition it requires leadership and know how. The educational value should not be overlooked. In undertaking a survey Rural Policy Group was accumulating facts and arousing the peoples' interest in that problem and informing them of the activities and purposes of The Rural Policy Group in relation to it. This was also making people conscious of community problems in general." Thus the survey performed other essential functions besides fact finding.

Both methods involved large numbers of local people, the first by organizing them into discussion and action groups, the second by getting participation as fact finders. Also both methods required consistent effort and organizing skill. Extension specialists assisted in some of these activities, particularly in relation to the technical aspects of the health survey.

THE FUNCTION OF DISCUSSION IN RURAL POLICY GROUP

When the Rural Policy Group members and leaders felt an issue was important enough to investigate thoroughly, they made it the topic of more than one meeting. This was done in order that everyone could see the problem more clearly and their part in it.

Since the membership of Rural Policy Group included the leaders of almost all the rural groups in the county, it was expected that through the discussions in Rural Policy Group meetings, these county leaders would become interested in investigating the problems further. Until these leaders were convinced, however, that an issue was worth further effort, the problem or issue was left at the discussion level.

When it was determined from fact-finding and discussion that action was necessary, it was possible for each leader to work through the organizations he represented to develop interest among the membership.

This pattern has important connotations for decision making. The procedure was not just to find a problem and then decide to do something about it; but went deeper into an investigation of what really was involved in the situation and what the facts were. Then, as enlightenment on the issue came more information was obtained and more people were involved. As this happened, opposition declined to a minimum.

Another important function of discussion in an open-forum such as the Rural Policy Group, is to give opportunity for all groups and agencies to find where they fitted into the picture and what their part was in solving the problem. Discussion was necessary to locate channels, both official and voluntary, that could bring about action.

Financial Arrangements of the Rural Policy Group

The Rural Policy Group did not have large financial requirements; however, it did require money to pay for mimeographing or printing reports and notices, programs, stationery, postage and for paying expenses of speakers or for resource materials for fact-finding committees. Funds for these expenses were obtained from contributions made by the organizations represented in the membership. Larger organizations were assessed \$25 while smaller ones were asked to pay \$2 or more annually.

During the early development when meetings were held in local communities as well as at the county level, Farmers Institutes through the Agricultural Extension Service contributed to the expense of bringing experts to the local communities.

Meetings of Rural Policy Group

Rural Policy has usually met once each month during the Fall, Winter and Spring seasons, holding seven or eight meetings annually. Meetings have been held in conjunction with a dinner in a hotel dining room, with both husband and wife attending.

Attendance varies from 40 to 100 people with the usual number being about 60.

The program is conducted by the chairman of the fact-finding committee that is presenting the topic for the night and may take the form of a lecture, a debate, a panel discussion, motion or still pictures, reports by the committee members or any other form desirable. Often persons that are specialists on particular problems are brought in from such agencies as the extension service, experiment station or other agencies both public and private. Almost always there is audience participation either directly from the floor or in buzz sessions, or both. The program time after the meal is usually limited to an hour and one half.

TEN YEARS OF ACTIVITY IN THE RURAL POLICY GROUP

In the first 10 years of its existence, the Rural Policy Group engaged in many interesting areas of fact-finding and discussion. The accompanying table shows the range of topics. Some areas received more attention than others; this does not necessarily mean, however, that where more meetings were held more was accomplished. It does mean that Rural Policy Group members wanted to know more about the factors involved in these problems and felt strongly enough to follow them further.

Table I raises certain questions:

What actually did result from these meetings?

What type of need was the discussion satisfying?

And finally, what was accomplished in the county?

It is difficult to point out many direct cause and effect relationships for the things that occurred after the Rural Policy Group began its fact-finding and interest-motivating role. Indeed, no one interviewed was willing to say that Rural Policy alone was responsible for any of the major accomplishments that occurred in the county. However, those interviewed did agree that Rural Policy Group had both major and minor roles in the development of many things. Because Rural Policy Group was a representative group with no particular axe to grind, it was able to synthesize and combine the forces of many rural and urban groups interested in community problems. In addition, it was able to stimulate interest and encourage people to work on common problems.

Table I
TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF TOPICS DISCUSSED IN
RURAL POLICY GROUP MEETINGS OVER A TEN
YEAR PERIOD 1945 TO 1955

Topic	No. of Discussions
1. Health - organization, facilities and needs . . .	11
2. Community planning	8
3. Youth Activities and Programs.	6
4. Conservation	6
5. Government, taxes and services	5
6. Rural-Urban relations	5
7. Church Problems	4
8. School Problems	4
9. Fire Prevention.	4
10. International relations	3
11. Rural Life and Public Affairs	3
12. Recreation	2
13. Farm Ownership and Security	2
14. Agricultural Extension	2
15. Safety	2
16. Farm Policy	2
17. Farm Income Off the Farm.	1
18. Utilities, Rural Telephone Service.	1
19. Rural Leadership.	1
20. Cooperatives	1
21. Banks and Rural Community	1
22. Meat Processing	1
23. County Fair	1

Some of the more specific things which have occurred over the years on which Rural Policy has carried out discussions and fact-finding programs are:

1. A county-wide Hospital Bond Issue for a county hospital.
2. A county-wide Rural Telephone study for better rural telephone service.

3. Establishment of the Clinton County Safety Council.
4. Establishment of the Clinton County Health Council.
5. Establishment of two Rural Chruch Farms.
6. Establishment of a Rural Zoning Board.
7. Establishment of a Soil Conservation District.
8. Establishment of the Extension Advisory Committee.
9. The formation of Children and Youth Committees for the Mid-Century White House Conference study.
10. The beginning of fire fighting agencies in the townships.

Many other immediate and long-range results could be enumerated that have been affected by the process of bringing them out into the broad light of public discussion. Such things include support for international relations programs, improving rural schools, improving farm-city relations, and the education of rural people on many public affairs and farming problems.

SOME PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rural Policy Group has been a notable development in the field of community action. Its strength lies in the following elements: the basic premise of including all groups related to its area of interest, its broad active leadership, its fact-finding and non-controversial role, its dealing with problems of present and wide concern, and the fact that there was a means (Extension Service) to implement the necessary details related to the business of the organization.

There are several problems related to maintaining an effective organization of this kind. First, it is necessary to have a high degree of awareness of community needs. A large voluntary organization will degenerate when there is a lack of crisis situations or problems of a general enough nature to provoke extensive interest.

Second, stagnation of leadership or lack of involvement of new leaders must be avoided. After prodigious efforts over long periods of time leaders often tend to have difficulty finding new approaches to problems and sometimes may need new personalities to add enthusiasm for taking on new projects. This does not

mean that new people should be brought in just to change leaders around. Such change would destroy continuity of effort and require paid personnel to carry out the program.

Third, after a period of several years patterns of activity and methods for doing things tend to become institutionalized and fixed. In an organization attempting to meet new problems the methods used cannot become fixed and inflexible. For example, when discussion topics and programs are set far in advance, it is not possible to follow up a problem that requires immediate and continued action; therefore, interest cannot be developed which will grow into understanding and action.

Fourth, an effective means for involving people at the local level in important problems is necessary in order to get widespread participation. This may require a more direct relationship among the Granges, Farm Bureau Advisory Councils and other local groups in order to assure local discussion of important topics. This might be done by assuring membership for Grange lecturers and discussion leaders in local groups. Representation from local groups that are a part of a county-wide organization may be strengthened if the nominations are channeled through the parent organization. This would make the organization responsible for maintaining representation from its subsidiary groups. If, however, the organization chose persons that represented a strong factional interest it would destroy the basic purpose of the group and would make it ineffective.

Fifth, it is necessary to involve persons who are in positions to make decisions for the larger society, including both public office holders and other political leaders as well as many of the important leaders in urban and business circles. Operating entirely outside the sphere of political decision-making makes it necessary to put forth tremendous efforts in order to develop public opinion enough to bring about action or change. In many instances action could be taken by more efficient and direct means if the decision making leaders were involved at an earlier point and became identified with the findings. When this occurs leaders will be better informed and less likely to be uncommitted on the recommendations made. Such leaders may be included as advisors to fact-finding committees if not members of the committees themselves.

Sixth, in an area where urban people make up an important part of the total population some effective means of communicating with urban decision makers is necessary. A means of transmitting the point of view and the needs of rural people to urban dwellers and for translating rural interests into common

interests is necessary. This requires continuous effort and inventive new approaches. Only in very limited areas can the rural people ignore the interests of their urban neighbors. This is particularly true where most of the decision making positions are held by non-farm people.

Finally, a voluntary community development group should periodically review and reassess the work of such organizations as the Rural Policy Group. The appraisal should examine methods of operation, leadership and membership. In such a review the assistance of outside agencies is often helpful. However it is accomplished, such a review is vital in order to maintain an effective organization.

APPENDIX

Methods Used in This Study

The study of the Rural Policy Group as an organization was conducted by historical methods and by informal semi-structured interviews using a few basic questions but maintaining freedom to follow any direction or lead that opened up. No schedule was used for this historical-functional analysis. A notebook was used to record answers. All those that had served as officers or executive committee members were interviewed and in addition the Agricultural Extension agent and former agents were interviewed extensively.

A thorough search of recorded information was made using minutes books, past reports of the fact-finding committees, programs, annual reports of the extension agents, newspaper reports, scrapbooks and others.

In addition, the writer was a participant and observer in several meetings of the organization both in officers' meetings, committee meetings and the regular meetings of the organization.